

Mr. Barrott

24 Draft

Dear Mr. Wilson:

I have received and carefully considered your letter of September 14 requesting background information and comments on the proposed endorsement by the American Legion of House Concurrent Resolution No. 112.

I regret to say that I cannot provide any specific background information on the proposal to establish a Joint Congressional Committee on Cold War Strategy, nor would it be appropriate for me to comment officially on this proposal, since it relates to the internal organization of the Congress, on which the Executive Branch cannot with propriety take a position unless and until requested to do so. I believe, however, that there are some factors which your National Executive Committee might like to consider before deciding whether or not to endorse House Concurrent Resolution No. 112.

There is, of course, much to be said in favor of establishing, within each House of Congress, a committee equivalent of the National Security Council, on the premise that the Congress would be well advised to follow the example of the Executive Branch in coordinating its machinery for formulating national security policy and programs. If this is the intent

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of the proposal, and of the American Legion's endorsement thereof, it has much to commend it. However, the establishment of a committee of this kind would appear impractical unless there were reason to believe that the present standing committees of Congress, whose jurisdictions are most carefully detailed in law and in the rules of the Senate and of the House of Representatives, could be induced or required to alter their areas of responsibility in order to vest in one committee total responsibility for considering all matters relating to the national security. I would point out, for example, that the Armed Services Committee of the House is vested with jurisdiction over the "common defense" so that this committee could - and presumably would - contend that the subject area contemplated by a new committee on national security policy was already within its compass. One might anticipate the same reaction from other affected committees.

If the Joint Congressional Committee on Cold War Strategy is simply to be super-imposed on the existing committee structure, then additional problems could well arise. There is cause for concern as to whether this new committee would in fact serve as a single forum for testimony on and studies concerning cold or other kinds of war, so that all could be weighed together and a rational all-encompassing judgment produced, or whether it would simply compound present jurisdictional difficulties arising from the overlapping interests of the Armed Services Committees, the Foreign Relations and Foreign Affairs Committees, the Joint Atomic Energy Committee, the Government Operations Committees, and the Appropriations

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Committees, all of which are concerned in one way or another with the "cold war." These committees already work closely with various agencies of government in developing policies and programs to meet the Communist threat (such as the Mutual Security Program, the Information Program, ^{etc.} and study, on behalf of the Congress, Communist activities, measures to strengthen free world institutions, and the adequacy of national security policies and programs. Unless virtually every other committee in Congress should accede to a diminution of its jurisdiction (a prospect rather difficult to envisage), a Joint Congressional Committee on Cold War Strategy would simply duplicate this work and add to the burdens of Executive Branch witnesses and officials.

I believe it would also be worth considering whether it would be feasible or desirable to sub-divide the nation's security by undertaking, as it were, to segregate "cold war" strategy and techniques from other efforts to provide for the security and the future of the entire nation. It is difficult to visualize how this could be done without detriment to other activities, or without distortion of some national security policies and programs; indeed the Executive Branch has sought to integrate its national security policies and programs rather than to break them down into separate categories which cannot in fact be sharply defined or differentiated.

Aside from determining whether or not to endorse House Concurrent Resolution No. 112 I should think you would also wish to consider the tone and nature of any endorsement which you might decide to make. I note

that your proposed Resolution asserts that all our "cold war" efforts of the past fifteen years have been inadequate and unsuccessful - a judgment which I am confident would be questioned by many. Similarly, the Resolution indicates that national morale and will to resist are being steadily eroded, a view which would also appear questionable. Speaking with complete candor, as I gather you would wish, the language which the Legion is asked to adopt appears both rather extreme and somewhat unrelated to the actual scope and functioning of the proposed Joint Congressional Committee on Cold War Strategy.

Despite my inability to respond fully to your questions, I hope that these comments may be of some help to you and your colleagues in your deliberations. If I can be of any further assistance in this matter, please let me know.

Sincerely yours,

Karl G. Harr, Jr.
Special Assistant
to the President

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ACTION		DIRECT REPLY		PREPARE REPLY	
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COMMENT		FILE		RETURN	
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Remarks: John: This is a new draft of Harr's letter to the American Legion. They included a paragraph on our point. Col. Coffey, Harr's assistant, asked if we could comment by Monday. I told him it would be impossible to have the DCI see it, but I would discuss with you. Please let me have your reactions. <div style="text-align: right;">T. A. Parrott</div>					
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